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Sent: Monday, March 09, 2015 11:26 AM
To: GAETestimony
Cc: Heavner Lisa; Rep. Hampton, John; Sen. Witkos, Kevin; Potvin-Piecuch Michele
Subject: Testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 1051

Testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 1051 AN ACT STRENGTHENING CONNECTICUT 'S ELECTIONS

Senators Cassano and Gerratana, Representatives Jutila and Alexander, and members of the committee, I am Karen Cortés, Democratic Registrar of Voters for the Town of Simsbury. I am submitting testimony in opposition to Senate Bill No. 1051, An Act Strengthening Connecticut's Elections.

Connecticut's election process needs improvement, but this bill does not address the underlying issues that create delay, confusion and inaccuracy. In my town of Simsbury, Registrars have a long history of working collaboratively to run fair, impartial elections. But even with strong cooperation, the mandated procedures that consistently create problems will not be resolved with this bill's approach.

1. This bill offers no cure to Connecticut's Election Day reporting ills: There is presently no functioning electronic election results submission system. Paper and pencils remain the tools of election tabulation. At the close of the polls on Election Day, every voting precinct must hand transcribe totals from paper tapes produced by tabulators-- hand writing separate vote counts for poll ballots, absentee ballots and Election Day registration ballots from paper tapes to the poll moderators' reports. Ballots not read by machine must be hand counted. The paper checklist of registered voters marked as having voted must be hand counted and reconciled with the number of ballots cast. Only after all of this hand transcription is complete can the results be again hand transcribed to the Head Moderator report that is eventually scanned and emailed to the Office of the Secretary of the State.

2. Results tabulation is hampered by use of current technology: The AccuVote tabulators currently used in Connecticut are capable of electronically transmitting election results. Instead, we are required to engage in manual, error-prone hand tabulation.

3. New innovations are unfunded: Legislation has passed allowing the option to use electronic poll books rather than checking voters in at the polls with a paper list. The Connecticut Electronic Poll Book System Requirement Specification was released this week. I cannot speak for other Connecticut towns, but Simsbury will continue the use of manually checking in voters as budget constraints did not allow for the purchase of new systems. Simsbury will continue to hand count the number of voters checked as having voted, and will continue to manually data enter the voting history for each voter after elections-- delaying election results.

4. The Connecticut Voter Registration System is at times unstable:

I have experienced frequent instances when the Connecticut Voter Registration System (CVRS), which is used to maintain the official voter registry and generate lists of registered voters for Election Day, has been inaccessible (including at 6:05 a.m. on Election Day 2014, and several cases in the past month when attempting to generate canvass letters). I do not know if this problem is caused by CVRS or the server on which it operates, but the periodic inability to access the system, or difficulty using it while completing important tasks, needs to be resolved.

5. The language in this bill keeps politics in the mix and does not resolve election administration problems: Charging the legislative body of each municipality, in consultation and coordination with the municipal clerk, to appoint one registrar of voters leaves open the possibility for political influence on the election process. Will a Republican-controlled or

Democrat-controlled legislative body select a member of the opposite party to run elections, or will the majority chose one of its own?

I urge to you vote "no" on SB 1051 and instead work to create voting procedures that allow registrars to do their jobs accurately and efficiently.

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